

## **Insecurities.** by **orangeconut**

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**Summary:**

Billy introduces them to him. He calls Steve his friend, and Steve has to remind himself that it's because Susan is only two rooms away and not because he doesn't want his super cool and amazing California friends to know he's dating some small town asshole.

( or, just a good 'ol jealous!steve fic )

## Insecurities.

### Author's Note:

- For [CrownedKingLewis](#).

haha, hi. guess who hasn't updated her fix at all but is writing other stuff anyway 'cause she's hopeless. oops?? i just needed to jealous!steve out in this world, okay? there's not enough!!

Steve never had jealousy issues until Nancy. Until he actually had something he cared about losing. His parents barely gave him the time of day, and any girl before her had only been good for a couple fun romps in the sack, nothing more. Hell, he didn't even experience platonic jealousy, never giving a shit what Tommy did or who he did it with.

But then Nancy showed up and she was beautiful and sweet and *so fucking good*, too good for Steve. Maybe he was insecure about it more than he thought. Maybe that's what made him see red when he saw her and Byers sitting on her bed. Byers who took pictures of her while she was undressing. Byers who had creepy eyes, always kept to himself, and walked around like he thought he was better than everyone in this town. God, Steve had hated him, and he'd hated the idea that maybe Nancy wanted him more than she wanted Steve.

He didn't hate him anymore, but it hadn't done shit for Steve's insecurities when Nancy ended up leaving him for the guy. He could hear that nasty voice in his head going *i told you i told you i told you*, over and over again. But.

He got over it.

He got over it because he cared about Nancy, and he ( eventually ) cared about Jonathan, and he wanted them to be happy and he was trying *so fucking hard* to be a better person than he used to be.

Then he became friends with Billy Hargrove.

Then he became *more* than friends with Billy Hargrove.

Billy didn't give a shit that he had jealousy issues, or insecurities. Billy wasn't perfect, and that was good because Steve wasn't either and he was *so tired* trying to pretend like he was. He had to be good for everyone. His parents. Nancy. The kids. But with Billy he didn't have to be all that. He could be an asshole, or he could just be *tired*. Either way, the blonde held on tight and took it all in stride.

Of course, it helps that, for a while, there's nothing around to *make* Steve jealous.

The girls who made eyes at Billy, or touched his arm, or giggled when he said something that wasn't all that funny, didn't bother Steve. They weren't threats. Billy was as gay as he was blonde, and as far as they both knew, Steve was the only other resident queer in Hawkins that was their age. That made him feel safe. That made his insecurities sit comfortably in the back of his mind, sated.

And then Billy turned eighteen.

He turned eighteen and Steve was staying over because Neil was out of town and Susan didn't give a shit; far too trusting and too oblivious to ever think her womanizing step-son liked dick.

It was ten am and they were on the couch eating breakfast, Max sandwiched between them and looking toward the window every five minutes impatiently. Steve thought nothing of it. He figured maybe Lucas or one of the others was coming over since Neil wasn't around.

Then there's the sudden sound of a van pulling into Billy's driveway and Max is launching off the couch. Billy stops too, mutes the TV and cocks his head like the sound is familiar to him before he's getting up. He gets to the window just as Max gets to the door and goes, "Holy shit."

Max grins, opens the door, and Steve can make out five varying faces as Max goes, "Happy Birthday, Billy!"

Turns out, it's his friends. His *best friends* from California. Max had stolen their numbers from the little box under Billy's bed and called

them up. They took a road trip all the way here *just* for his birthday.

Billy looks like how a kid is supposed to look when their parents tell them that they're going to Disneyland. He's grinning from ear to ear, and once he's over his shock, each of them are pulling him in for separate hugs, laughing and greeting him.

Steve stands there and just feels... stupid. Like he doesn't belong.

They look like Billy too. Or, at least, the kinds of people Billy would hang out with if he had the option. They look like they *fit* him.

Billy introduces them to him. He calls Steve his *friend*, and Steve has to remind himself that it's because Susan is only two rooms away and *not* because he doesn't want his *super cool and amazing* California friends to know he's dating some small town asshole.

The first hand he shakes belongs to a blonde dream boat. He's not as beautiful as Billy, but he's a close second. He's got green eyes, freckles, and a smile that makes you immediately want to be his friend. It almost looks wrong on the leather jacket, ripped jeans, and combat boots wearing body his head is attached to. He also has one earring dangling from a lobe. A feather.

His name is Cal, he's the oldest of the five, the owner of the van, and-- as Steve finds out later-- the guy who pierced Billy's ear for him when he was sixteen.

The second hand belongs to a girl, and maybe the most intimidating girl Steve's ever laid eyes on, *including* the telekinetic thirteen year old he babysits sometimes. She has long, straight black hair that'd probably go passed her ass if she didn't have it tied up in a high pony-tail. She's wearing big earrings, dark lipstick, an army jacket, and when she greets him she pops a bubble in his face and grins when Steve jumps.

Billy tells her *don't be a bitch* and she cusses him out in what Steve is pretty sure is Spanish.

Later, when they're eating at the diner with the kids, Billy says, "Camilla here is what we call a dyke--" and, without missing a

beat, Camilla tosses a ketchup covered fry at him, cackles when it stains his shirt, and goes, "S'cuse you, *mamahuevo*. We prefer the term carpet muncher," and everyone laughs except for Dustin who goes, "Uh, Steve, what's a carpet muncher?" which only makes everyone laugh harder.

Third person to shake his hand is another chick. This one's head is totally shaved and she's got some sort of tattoo sticking out from the neck of her cut up shirt that says *FUCK OFF* across the front. She's got an unlit cigarette between her lips and holds Steve's hand for a little too long, looking him in the eye like she can read his fucking soul.

Billy rolls his eyes, shoves her off and goes, "Quit it with your weird pagan shit, Hannah." Which makes her grin and step back.

The next guy is called *Ant*, ( "it's short for Anthony *and* a joke 'cuz he's so fucking huge, Steve, get it?" ) and even though he's about the size of Hopper he seems friendly enough, but Steve isn't giving him much attention because he's finally realized why the last guy looks so fucking familiar.

It's Daniel. *The* Daniel. The one Billy would hook up with, the one he lost his virginity to, the one his fucking father *caught him* with.

They'd hugged the longest, Steve remembers, and he hates himself for it.

His eyes are just as pretty as Billy once said, his hair is cut down into a Mohawk, and there's a jagged white scar standing out against brown skin under his jaw. Steve knows that has to be Neil's handiwork after he caught them together.

His smile is warm ( it puts Cal's to shame ) and he smells good. "You're a pretty one," he remarks and Steve hates himself for blushing. To his side Billy-- only half-serious-- goes, "Watch it, D, he's spoken for," and even though it's not a blatant *he's mine*, it still makes Steve feel all warm and keeps his insecurities at bay.

At least for a while.

They hang around at the house for a while. Ant gives Max noogies

and Camilla teases her about *becoming a lady* and laughs when Max wrinkles her nose and tells her to *fuck off*. Susan comes out at some point, looks surprised but greets them all anyway, and then they head out because the California Five are starving and Steve and Billy had just smoked a joint before they got there so they're pretty starving too.

Max asks if she can call the guys to meet them there and Billy shrugs, so when they get there there's a bunch of loud brats waiting for them, the loudest-- Dustin-- going, "We saved the good booths!"

Jane seems fucking enamored with Hannah and her lack of hair which is real cute. She goes, "My hair was gone once too," and Hannah replies with, "Yeah? I bet you looked real bitchin'," and Jane looks damn near ready to shave her head again right there.

Daniel compliments Will's jacket with the rainbow across it and Will blushes red and thanks him with a soft smile and his eyes in his lap. Lucas gets into a very heated discussion with Camilla about some sort of science mambo jumbo Steve doesn't understand, and even *Mike*-- who hates just about everyone-- seems to enjoy himself.

The kids approve of Billy's friends faster than they ever approved of Billy ( and even that still ranges from day to day ). They spend far too long in the diner, talking too loud and eating too much. Steve feels a bit bad so he figures he'll leave Keith a nice tip for putting up with them.

Steve and Dustin are returning to the table with another round of milkshakes when they pass Billy and Daniel. He pauses, goes, "What's up?" and Billy shrugs while fishing his pack of smokes from his pocket.

"Nothin', we're goin' out for a smoke."

Without thinking, Steve says, "Oh, gimme a second and I'll join you," and he knows it's a mistake before the last couple words leave his lips. Billy and Daniel exchange looks, there's a pause and then Billy licks his lips.

Daniel says, "I'll head on out," then keeps walking.

"We uh... kinda' wanted to talk alone." His boyfriend says, and he glances at his feet for a second before looking back at Steve. "There's a lot of shit left unsaid between us and after what Neil did I--"

Steve feels like a fucking idiot. He wants the floor to fucking open up and swallow him whole, "No, yeah--" he shakes his head, offers a smile that's completely forced and hopes Billy doesn't notice. "-- that makes sense--" thing is, *it really does*, he's just being an insecure baby. "--I'll... see you in a minute?"

Billy nods, they look at each other. Steve wants to kiss him. Steve can't kiss him. The pause passes and he steps away, but fingers catch his wrist before he can completely turn. He looks back at the blonde and notes the crease between his eyebrows, "You good?" Billy asks, because Steve can't be subtle worth *shit* and he feels like a fucking ass because here it's Billy birthday and his *best friends* are here and Steve is feeling bad for himself.

God, he's selfish.

So he smiles again, tries to make this one seem a little more sincere, and turns his hand over to brush his fingertips over the pulse of Billy's wrist. "I'm good," he lies and wishes for probably the hundredth time that he could kiss his boyfriend. "But I'm drinking your milkshake."

It seems to work, because Billy chuckles a little, goes, "Go ahead," and then walks outside.

Steve takes his seat back at one of the booths and tries not to steal glances out the window to see if he can spot Billy and Daniel. He can, which he realizes is worse because that means he can see how close they stand to each other. He can see them share space as Billy helps Daniel light his cigarette. He can see Billy laugh at something Daniel says. He can see Daniel touch his arm like the girls at school do. *He can see*, and he loses his appetite, feels like he might throw up, and just wants to *get out of there*.

His fingers flex under the table and he thinks about Nancy and Jonathan in her bedroom. He thinks about her telling him *nothing happened* and *you got it wrong*. He thinks about her calling him *bullshit*

a year later and running out of town with that same person. He thinks about them having sex. He thinks about Jonathan holding her close and kissing her nape after their done. He thinks about her smiling all soft and happy and *just for him*.

Then Nancy is suddenly Billy, and Jonathan is Daniel and Steve wonders if Billy and Daniel would be together now if Billy was still in California. He wonders if Daniel would be his boyfriend instead of himself. He wonders if Billy's ever smiled at Daniel in the mornings like he smiles at Steve, or if Daniel's ever woken up to Billy making him coffee and breakfast. He wonders and wonders and *wonders*.

He wonders until he realizes someone's saying his name and finally comes back to earth, blinking in the direction of the noise. It's Dustin, staring at him like he's grown a second head, and then Steve realizes *everyone's* kind of looking at him like that. Then he finally notices the cold, like he shoved his hand into the freezer, and looks down. The cheap plastic cup that says Coca-Cola across the front is pretty much crushed in his grip and there's vanilla milkshake pouring over the edges like lava out of a volcano, covering his hand and wrist, dripping onto the table. He's pretty sure there's plastic cutting into his palm, too.

"Uh, " he says, then adds, "sorry," then finishes with, "my bad."

Dustin goes, "Dude," and Steve suddenly gets up, excuses himself, and heads for the bathroom, cradling his soaked fist in his hand to try and catch what milkshake he can so Keith doesn't give him the stink eye.

He wishes he can lock the door, can't, then goes straight for the sink, flipping the tap on cold before shoving his hand under it. He slowly opens his palm and winces when a piece of plastic pulls off skin. Eventually the vanilla shake and water combo turns into just pink water, and there's a couple pieces of Coca-Cola cup in his hand, but nothing bad enough to warrant, like, stitches. A bandage or two would be nice though.

He focuses on cleaning off, feeling stupid and cursing himself out under his breath. He can't believe he did that in front of Billy's friends, in front of the *kids*. Losing his cool like some kind of



*neanderthal* that can't control himself.

He's pulling a particular small sliver of plastic out when the bathroom door opens and Steve lifts his head, meeting Billy's gaze in the mirror. For a second they just look at each other, and then Billy's stalking across the room and taking the wrist of Steve's injured hand. Billy brings it up and under the shitty lighting and goes, "Christ, Harrington."

Steve frowns, looks away, and jerks his hand out of Billy's grasp, pushing it back under the water. It stings, he winces. "I know-- sorry. I'm handling it. Can you tell Keith I'll pay for the cup?"

"Harrington."

"Because if you don't he's going to throw a fit, as if the cup didn't cost him like the fraction of a cent to buy."

"Steve."

"I mean, my dad owns a company for God's sake, I know how *cheap* you can buy something when you buy it in bulk. The whole set probably cost--"

"Steve." Billy drawls low and close, baritone voice in his ear. Suddenly, he's looking at Billy in the mirror again, and Steve can't remember when Billy had grabbed his wrist again, but there it is, sitting firmly but harmlessly in his grasp. They stare a little longer, then Billy's face softens and he goes, "*Hey*," and pulls Steve until he's facing him.

"Sorry," he says and Billy frowns more.

"You gonna' tell me why you Hulk'd out on a shitty plastic cup, baby? Or do I need to tell Henderson to test you for gamma radiation?" Steve thinks about making fun of Billy for being a secret geek.

Instead he goes, "I... got distracted."

An eyebrow quirks, "Distracted, huh? With what?"

“With... thinking.”

Billy snorts in a bemused kind of way and takes Steve’s other wrist. He brings them in close and rubs his thumbs over the pulse points underneath his skin. “If you keep answering like this I’ll be turning nineteen before you get it all out.”

Steve rolls his eyes and shoves at him a little, but it’s halfhearted. “Nothing, man, don’t worry-- I was just being stupid. You know how I get.”

Blue eyes watch him for a moment and then Billy nods, “I do know how you get.” Steve frowns, feels a lump in his throat, and thinks this is when Billy’s going to tell him how insecure and annoying he’s being. Instead he goes, “Like how I get when you’re around Wheeler.”

Steve blinks, “Mike?”

He barks out a laugh, “No. Nancy, you fuckin’ idiot. The way you look at her sometimes, or smile at her.” Billy licks his lips, glances away, then back. “Makes me wanna barf half the time and crawl in a hole the other half.”

Oh, Steve thinks. He’d never even considered the notion, even when they hung out with Nancy and Billy had a sour attitude after. He always figured it was because Billy didn’t like Nancy, not because--

“Oh my god,” he looks at the other boy then goes, “Wait, please don’t tell me *that’s* why you hate Nancy--”

Billy shoots him a glare, “No, asshole. I don’t like her because she’s a snobby little princess who broke your heart. The fact that she’s also your *ex* is just an evil little bonus.” He’s jealous too. Of Nancy. It was laughable really. Since the first moment Steve ever got close to Billy, Nancy had been a far away memory. His relationship with her was only ever connected to his insecurities now, nothing else. He loved her, but not in the way he once had. She’d always be important to him, but he didn’t love her. Not like he loved Billy. Not even close.

“She doesn’t even compare to you,” he says, a little too awestruck at the idea that Billy was *jealous* of *Nancy* to consider how disgustingly

romantic the words are. Billy does, though, and his eyes widen a fraction before the tips of his ears get pink like they do when Steve gets sweet and soft and all the things Billy isn't used to.

"Yeah," he finally lands on and leans in until their foreheads are touching. Until they're sharing breath. "And Daniel ain't even comparable." God, Steve really loves him.

"Outside--"

It's vague, and Billy reads him like they've been together for years anyway. "You wanna' know what we did outside? We smoked and I apologized about my dad almost killing him since I never got the chance to before. Then he asked me when you and me started dating, 'cuz apparently that shit was obvious from the get-go. Somethin' 'bout the way I look at you."

The way Billy looks at him? He's never noticed--

"So I was tellin' him the whole story." *Oh god*, Steve thinks. The whole story is *embarrassing* and not really romantic at all, just *super duper* awkward. "'Cuz Daniel's a sap for that shit. Then know what else I told him?"

Steve shakes his head, "I told him that I love you," Oh. *Oh oh oh*. "You big, jealous, idiot." Thing is, there isn't anger in Billy's voice, or judgment. He sounds exasperated, maybe, and amused. But he also sounds *understanding*; like this doesn't lessen his opinion of Steve. Like this doesn't change the way he sees him.

"I... love you too," because, honestly? What else do you say to *that*? "And I'm an idiot," Steve agrees, "I'm sorry, I was being so stupid--"

"Ain't a thing, pretty boy." Billy interrupts, "If you're stupid 'bout this, so am I." And then he leans in and kisses him soundly, fingers slipping into Steve's hair as Billy first slots their lips together then claims his mouth, teasing him open so he can taste him.

When they pull back, Billy takes a deep breath and takes Steve's injured hand, grabbing some paper towels to wrap around it. "Let's

go. They probably think you fell in.” And tugs Steve out of the bathroom.

They get back to the table-- which someone was kind enough to clean up for him-- and sit across from each other. Everyone’s quiet for a moment, and then Dustin says something dumb and Max throws a french fry and him and Jane laughs and everything goes back to normal.

Except that, sometime during all that, Steve realizes Billy’s staring at him, meets his gaze, smiles, and then stares in sudden surprise as the blonde leans over and kisses him. *Kisses him*. Like in public. Like where people can *see*. It’s short, nothing big, but everyone at the table notices it. The diner is mostly empty, filled with half-passed out drunks trying to get sober off coffee, and Keith went to the back, so-- it’s just the table.

It’s not the first time the kids caught them kissing, and after a beat, Mike screws up his nose and goes, “Ugh, *guys*, can you not--” and Camilla hits Ant on the bicep a little hard and says, “Hah, told you! You owe me fifteen bucks, fucker!”

Billy and Steve are still staring at each other as Billy goes, “Did you two bet on my love life?” His voice sounds exasperated and vaguely annoyed, but his gaze never wavers.

“Hey, *I* voted *for* it. Ant’s the one that didn’t agree with me.”

“Only ‘cause he seems too good for you,” the big guy answers and offers a shit eating grin that almost rivals Billy’s. The blonde looks away long enough to land a solid punch in Ant’s arm that barely seems to affect him. Everyone who’s listening laughs, Billy included.

Then he meets Steve’s gaze again, and Steve wonders if these are the looks Daniel meant because Billy’s kind of looking at him like a wolf stares at the moon. It makes Steve’s insides feel warmth in too many different ways, and Billy goes, “You ain’t wrong though,” before tossing Steve a wink and slumping down in his seat, slotting their legs together under the table.

Steve smiles, knocks his heel against Billy’s and goes, “Shut up,

stupid,” in the kind of way that sounds like *I love you*.

Billy grins wide and a little feral, licks his lips, and replies, “Make me,” in the kind of way that sounds like *I love you, too*.

**Author's Note:**

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